

**Mayor's column for  
The Edmonds Beacon  
Published on 11/12/04**

You may have heard about the topic that the Edmonds Planning Board has been discussing lately. It's a topic that brings out the best and worst of Edmonds citizens. It's a topic that drives some people to gather signatures on a petition. And it brought out many voices to a public hearing. The topic was building heights—again!

Rather than do their job for them and write about the pros and cons of increasing building heights, I want to share with you the Planning Board's history and mission. The board was created by the City Council to serve in an advisory capacity to the city in regional and local planning; specifically, in the development of the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance, and to review and amend that plan and ordinance from time to time. They also have ad hoc duties assigned by the City Council.

The Board consists of seven members who must reside in the city of Edmonds. They are appointed by the mayor with council confirmation and serve staggered terms on the board. Ideally, the members come from different parts of the city and hold differing jobs.

The board advises the council on all amendments to the comprehensive plan contained in Title 15, except setting fees, which is reserved for the City Council. It holds public hearings and makes recommendations to the mayor and council on proposed changes to the plan, the zoning regulations, and the zoning map. They advise on all parking matters that involve city ordinances or codes. They also serve as an ongoing park board.

The board researches and investigates specific projects assigned to it by the mayor or council. After analyzing data, holding public hearings, and organizing its findings, the board makes a presentation and, if appropriate, makes a recommendation to the mayor and council.

So, as you can see, the Planning Board basically gets the difficult and controversial tasks. And the worst part is that they are volunteers, as in, they don't get paid! They are a well-meaning group of citizens who offer their time to the city and its citizens for the common good of all. They spend hours studying, researching, looking toward the future, and listening to fellow Edmonds residents on whatever topic may be before them.

So, as the members of the Planning Board discuss heights, zones, and other changes to the downtown business core, remember that they are just doing their job. They hold public hearings to gather your thoughts on a particular topic so that they can make an informed recommendation to the City Council. They are happy to hear from the public; it gives them some basis to work from.

Even if you disagree with the Planning Board's recommendation, you still have an opportunity to affect the outcome because the City Council will hold a public hearing (or

two) as well. Between the Planning Board, the citizens, and the council, effective policy decisions will be made.

The height of buildings downtown has been a topic for discussion for a long, long time. I don't see it ending anytime soon.